A Comparative Visual Analysis of Nineteenth-Century Iranian Portrait Photography and Persian Painting

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2. THE WRITTEN IMAGE: TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY

> **"**Texts were invented in the second millennium BC in order to take the magic out of images, even if their inventors may not have been aware of this; the photograph, the first technical image, was invented in the nineteenth century in order to put texts back under a magic spell, even if its inventors may not have been aware of this. The invention of the photograph is a historical event as equally decisive as the invention of writing. With writing, history in the narrower sense begins as a struggle against idolatry. With photography, "post-history" begins a struggle against textolatry"
>
> Vilém Flusser[105]

The usage of text/ calligraphy in the Persian painting tradition seems to have a great impact on nineteenth-century Iranian photography. However, the relation of this particular phenomenon to photography is somehow more ambiguous than the laterality factor. It needs to be explored as to what end the photographer has used the inscription around the studio photographs, if they are used just as a decorative purpose, or just as plain text to provide some information (where the text is devoid of any stylistic components) or the text bears some symbolic, or hidden hints, or a combination of any of the above. For this purpose a careful reading of the text, its meaning as well as its style analysis, its symbolic significance, or its literary references, both within the pictorial and the photographic space, is a must that I will emphasis on in this chapter. Towards this end, I will categorize the photographs selected for this chapter according to three different parameters: by the degree of elaboration of the script; by the content or meaning of the text; and by the way in which the text has been implemented in the photographic space.

2.1. Persian calligraphy and its use in Persian painting tradition

The Persian word for calligraphy is *khosh-nevesí,* literally "beautiful writing". Calligraphy, out of all the arts, could be considered one of the most typical expressions of the Islamic spirit. The Qur'an itself has stressed the importance of writing several times. For example, in the earliest Sura[106], 96/3-4, God is described as the Almighty Who "taught man with the Pen" and in Sura 68 the oath begins: "*Nun!* And by the Pen….". The idea of writing, as stated by the scholar in Islamic culture Annemarie Schimmel, is found everywhere in the Holy Book: 'the Qur'an is pre-eternally written on a well-preserved tablet (Sura 85/21-22)'.[107] Writing was, thus, considered to be of divine origin and the letters were considered the only worthy

[105] Flusser 2000, p. 19.
[106] Sura is one of the 114 sections into which the Qur'an is divided. Suras are subdivided into ayat, "verses". Muslims believe that these suras were given to the last of Allah's prophets, Mohammad. Mohammad is said to have built on and perfected the teachings of Abraham, Moses and Jesus.
[107] Schimmel 1970, p. 1.

carriers of holyscriptures and divine revelation. As stated by Schimmel, every human fate has been written since pre-eternity, and its unchangeability is expressed in the Prophetic tradition *qad jaffa'l-qalam* "The Pen has already dried up".[108] As Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations professor Franz Rosenthal points out: "Sacredness became a characteristic element in writing".[109] The sixteenth-century Iranian artist and critic Qadi Ahmad suggests the remarkable importance that calligraphy held within the Muslim world: "Through the *qalam* (pen) existence receives God's orders, From Him the candle of the *qalam* receives its light. The *qalam* is a cypress in the garden of knowledge, The shadow of its order is spread over dust".[110] Most studies of Islamic calligraphy have concentrated on historical questions. The remarkable work of Nabia Abbot, Anne Marie Schimmel, Martin Lings, Yasin Safadi, and Sheila Blair among others, has created an important body of information concerning certain aspects of this phenomenon. *Islamic Inscriptions* by Blair is am important book as referent for the present chapter since it is a rigorous study of the content and function of inscriptions found from monumental arquitecture to all kinds of portable objects.[111]

Focusing on the particular case of Iran, all different kinds of Persian art are characterized by abstraction, sensuous tendencies, harmony and more than anything else by its decorative tendency. In Persian calligraphy this is especially true. In the words of the Iranian scholar Ehsan Yarshater, 'the obscuring of the main function of an art through indulgence in secondary aspects of it, finds a further example in the development of Persian calligraphy. In its latest stages, the artist is so much enthralled by his elaboration of curves, circles, and flowing lines, that communication of the written word becomes almost an alien thought to him. It is a thrilling experience to look at late cursive Persian calligraphy, with its extraordinary grace and its intricate artistry, but to try to read it is quite a different matter. One might just as well try to solve a recondite riddle'.[112]

Calligraphy was practised not only by professional calligraphers, but also by princes and nobles. Calligraphers were an essential requirement for any self-respecting court, both to instruct the prince's children in the principles of the art and to produce manuscripts for the royal library. The calligrapher's pen was made out of reed and was, according to strict rules, considered to be the "cypress in the garden of knowledge". Calligraphy was regarded as an expression of man's spiritual state; for "purity of writing proceeds from purity of heart" (Sultan Ali Mashhadi). Therefore the calligrapher had to undergo observances similar to those of a holy person.[113] As stated by Schimmel, from the very beginning, two different types of writing seem to have existed side by side. The normal type for correspondence, as found in papyri, was cursive and a forerunner to the later so-called *Naskh*-style: round and easy to write. For copying the Holy Book, however, another type is used, called *Kufi,* though there should be a distinction between Meccan, Medinan and Kufic proper.[114] The Islamic calligraphy scholar Nabia Abbott prefers to speak here of "Qur'anic scripts" in contrast to the normal hand.[115]

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[108] Schimmel 1970, p. 1.
[109] Rosenthal 1961, p. 17.
[110] Ahmad 1959.
[111] See: Abbott 1939; Lings 1977; Safadi 1978; Schimmel 1970; Schimmel 1984; Blair 1998 and 2006.
[112] Yarshater 1962, p. 69.
[113] Kianush k, 2000: http://www.art-arena.com/cal.htm
[114] Schimmel 1970, p. 5.
[115] Abbott 1941, p. 69 ff.

In this chapter, I am concerned with the cursive scripts, mostly used in Persian miniature painting and also in photography, as we shall see later on. My aim is to analyze the use of text in the photograph as an ornamental and symbolic element and to explore how this use is related to calligraphy, miniature and Qajar painting. I will introduce some examples of Persian miniature painting and Qajar portraiture that will aid the understanding of some nineteenth-century Iranian portrait photographs. Two of the topics that I am more concerned with are calligraphic inscriptions within the photographic space and the kinds of cursive scripts used in the photograph. In order to achieve this, a brief introduction to the different types of script styles is required.

As the Islamic art historian Yasin Hamid Safadi states, the "six styles" known in Arabic as *al-Aqlam al-Sittah,* and in Persian and Turkish as *Shis Qalam,* are cursive scripts which were first raised to the status of major scripts when they were subjected to strict calligraphic rules by Ibn Muqlah (d. 940)[116]. Persian calligraphers excelled in all styles of writing. The names of these classical cursive scripts are *Thuluth, Naskhi, Muhaqqaq, Rayhani, Tawqi* and *Riqa.* Four more scripts, *Ghubar, Tumar, Tal'iq and Nastal'iq* were later added to Ibn Muqlah's repertoire. *Taliq* and *Nastal'iq* are known as the hanging scripts. As stated by the art historian in Islamic art Sheila Blair, of all scripts, by far the most important in this period was *Nastal'iq.* She further writes 'that Habiballah Faza'ili, the modern expert on Persian calligraphy, has estimated that 75 percent of everything written in Persian from the mid-fifteenth century was done in this script.'[117] We will see shortly that in Persian miniature painting and Qajar portraiture, *Thuluth* and *Nastal'iq* are the most widely used. In some nineteenth-century Iranian photographs, we can see the use of *Naskhi* script as well. Therefore, I will just focus on these three scripts and will introduce them briefly, as Safadi has defined them.

Thuluth was first formulated in the seventh-century during the Umayyad caliphate, but did not develop fully until the late ninth-century. The name means "a third" – whether because of the proportion of straight lines and curves, or because the script was a third of the size of another popular contemporary script, the *Tumar*, is not known.[118] *Thuluth* is still considered the most important of all the ornamental scripts. The first image (fig. 48) is a good example of *Thuluth* being a detail in the hand of the most famous Ottoman calligraphers, Shaykh Hamdullah, who was active in Istanbul in the early sixteenth-century. The text is part of an anecdote and translates: "A wise man was asked: What is humility?"

Naskhi was one of the earliest cursive scripts to evolve, but it gained popularity only after it had been redesigned by Ibn Muqlah in the tenth century. It was transformed by Ibn al-Bawwab and others into an elegant script worthy of the Qur'an, and ever since, more Qur'ans have been written in *Naskhi* than in any other script. It appealed particularly to the ordinary man because it was relatively easy to read and write. It is nearly always written with short horizontal stems, and with almost equal vertical depth above and below the medial line. The curves are full and deep, the uprights straight and vertical, the words generally well spaced.[119] The second image (fig. 49) is an example of *Naskhi* Qur'an copied also by the Ottoman calligrapher Shaykh Hamdullah al-Amasini in early sixteenth-century.

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[116] Safadi 1978, p. 52.
[117] Blair 2006, p. 418. See: Habiballah Faza'ili, *Atlas-I khatt: tahqiq dar khattut-I islami*, Tehran, 1971, pp 448-50; Hanaway and Spooner 1995, p. 3.
[118] Safadi 1978, p. 52.
[119] Safadi 1978, p. 62.

During the sixteenth-century in Persia, an important calligraphic development took place with the formulation of the *Ta'liq* (hanging) script from *Riqa'* and *Tawqi'*. The third image (fig. 50) is a composite page of Persian text in large ornamental *Tal'iq* and small *Nastal'iq* by Shah Mahmud al-Nishaburi in the early sixteenth-century. From *Ta'liq,* an even lighter and more elegant form evolved, known as *Nasta'liq*. The next image (fig. 51) presents a page from an album in *Nasta'liq* written by Mir`Ali during his stay in Bukhara in the middle sixteenth-century. Derived from both *Ta'liq* and *Nasta'liq* was *Shikasteh* (broken form), which is characterized by an exaggerated density in the super structured letters.[120] The next image presents a page in densely structured *Shikasteh* (fig. 52) written by Nawab Murid Khan in India, probably during the seventeenth century.

A challenging example of the use of the *Thuluth* and *Nasta'liq* scripts in Qajar painting is found in the painting of *Prince Mohammad Ali Mirza* by Jafar (fig. 53). The *Thuluth* script is used in the upper right-hand corner in two cartouches: *Navvab Muhammad`Ali Mirza (Shah) Qajar, fi shahr-i Rajab al-murajjab, Sanah 1236.* The *Nasta'liq* script is seen under the throne: *Raqam-i Jafar, chakir-i Dawlat.* The upper inscription reveals the name of the sitter as Fath 'Ali Shah's eldest son, Muhammad 'Ali Mirza, better known as Dawlatshah, whereas the lower one informs us of the name of the artist. Dawlatshah is sitting on a jewelled chair throne in full regalia, in keeping with the iconography and details of court costume. The portrait fully resembles those of Fath 'Ali Shah himself so much that easily the viewer can be confused with the real identity of the poseur. In this painting it is especially interesting the way, the calligraphic inscriptions identifying both sitter and painter, have been placed and how. The symbol of the Lion and the Sun belonged to the regal attire and the imperial image of the Persian court in the Qajar Era. In this painting, both symbols have been integrated in quite an interesting way: the throne has lion-shaped arms and the Sun symbol (*Khorshid Khanum* in Persian) has been placed in the upper right corner above the cartouche where the name of the sitter is written. The paraphernalia in the way the identity of the sitter is revealed contrasts with the sober way in which the identity of the painter is revealed through a plane calligraphic inscription on the floor, right under the sitter's throne, as if it was his carpet!

After going through much material, I found that most of the Qajar portraits analyzed use the *Thuluth* script for the name of the person depicted and the *Nasta'liq* script for the name of the artist. Since *Thuluth* is considered the most important of all ornamental scripts, the fact that the painter uses this script to identify the poseur may have some hierarchical reasons: he may have used this special script to show clearly the social status of the person depicted, shah or prince. Also, the way in which the painter arranges this kind of calligraphic ornament and information in the pictorial space is very interesting and seems to follow some kind of aesthetic and/or symbolic rules. The name of the person depicted, in this case always Shahs, princes and noblemen of lesser rank, is placed in the upper part of the painting, whereas the name of the painter finds its place in the lower corners of the painting. This seems to follow the rules of the Qajar courts as far as social status and hierarchy are concerned. The clearest example found is the one that I have just analyzed. Therefore, this seems to point out to the fact that, both the choice of the kind of script used and where it has been placed within the pictorial space reveal the social status of the poseur and the relationship established between the painter and his patron.

[120] Safadi 1978, p. 84.

As the Islamic art historian Oleg Grabar states, 'most written sources mention the painters after the calligraphers, whose prestige was certainly far greater. The classification of styles of writing has to be founded upon a definable and measurable starting point: the lozenge or square created by the application of the tip of the pen to the paper. Everything else follows more or less automatically. Except for very rare cases of strongly geometrical compositions, paintings do not generally lend themselves to the clear and rigid analysis that applies to calligraphy'.[121] Grabar, who is Professor Emeritus at the School of Historical Studies, Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and who is one of the leading scholars in the field of Iranian art history, continues further on to state that 'the relationship between calligraphy and painting may also be approached in a different way. The art of writing is characterized by order, precision and attention to detail, learned only by constant exercise. Parts of these exercises are preserved for later periods, especially that of the Ottoman'.[122] 'The presumed rigidity of this training might have conditioned the painters and may explain, amongst other things, the precision of their drawing, the clearly expressed contours, the clearly separated and always lively colours and the readability of all that is shown. On a slightly less technical level, calligraphic art required the artist to relinquish his own impulses and accept the rules already laid down for composition and design'.[123] Nevertheless, note how in all Qajar portrait paintings, painting and calligraphy are mixed together perfectly, always the calligraphic inscriptions being placed in the best possible places and with a harmonic understanding of space and design. This would be also a very important characteristic of text and photography, as we shall see with clear examples. Calligraphy flows through the painting and finds its proper place to become a perfectly harmonious work of art. This constitutes something like a poetic marriage of opposite elements (imagery and abstract calligraphic forms), in both visual art mediums, photography and painting. The calligraphic inscription not only does not disturb the perception of the final image, it also adds an extremely aesthetic dimension to it.

As stated by Blair, 'in the Islamic lands the earlier tradition of monumental writing not only continued but expanded. Inscriptions occur on objects of all media and materials, from the humblest, such as oil lamps and other unglazed ceramics, to the finest and most expensive, including rock crystals and jades. Inscriptions were added even in media where the technical limitations of the material make it extremely difficult to incorporate a running text, like silk textiles…. The demand for inscribed textiles was so great, however, that silk weavers in the Islamic countries soon overcame the confines of the technique, and by the tenth century Persian weavers had figured out how to incorporate long bands of inscriptions on their elaborated patterned silks woven on draw looms'.[124] With this long and well-rooted tradition of placing inscriptions in every possible object, regardless of size or function, it is not striking that nineteenth-century Iranian photographers also used inscriptions within the photographic space.

[121] Grabar 2001, p. 131.
[122] Grabar 2001, p. 131.
[123] Grabar 2001, p. 131.
[124] Blair 1998, p. 4.

2.2. On signatures and portraits

In this section I will study the function of the calligraphic inscriptions used in Persian paintings. I want to explore whether the calligraphic texts used within the pictorial space have merely an informative function or, perhaps in parallel, an aesthetic purpose in the final composition of the image.

According to one of the pioneers in the study of Qajar painting, the Islamic art historian S.J. Falk, 'the main occupation of the Persian artist until the eighteenth century was the illustration of manuscripts, a practice restricted by its nature to small-scale work where the qualities of detail and brilliant colour were of greater significance than texture or shading. This was based upon a code of representation, where to record directly from observation would have been the exception. The colours are clear and pure, the figures and objects finely drawn, but above all, a kind of idealization pervades the entire picture: one knows that the ground cannot have been pink, nor the sky gold, nor the vestments that variety of mineral colours'.[125] But, to be sure, the overall effect makes sense within its context, and this way of depicting brings out the illustrative potential of a picture, while at the same time creating an enjoyable painting. In contrast to this, the introduction of oils as a novel medium for making a large picture fit to hang on a wall was to produce some interesting results, as we shall see with some clear examples.

As the Islamic art historian and former curatorial assistant in the Islamic Department of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, Eleonor Sims states, 'until about the end of the fifteenth century, Iranian figural painting in any medium, at any period, is virtually always anonymous; authentically signed paintings are very rare. In the late fifteenth century a change is noticeable: some painters begin to sign their pictures, just as scribes had done for some centuries in the Muslim world. When the image was intended to represent a particular person, he (or she) may have even been identified by a written inscription. In other words, starting late in the fifteenth century, paintings begin to be qualified, modulated, explained and- most significantly- specified by words: a fact that represents a profound change in certain norms with which literary Iranian society viewed itself'.[126] I will analyze several miniature paintings and later Qajar portrait paintings from the fifteenth century onwards in order to explore the possibility of illustrating with examples Sim's statement. Sims further argues that one of the fundamental differences between the signatures and identifications on Ottoman and Mughal painting and those of Iranian paintings, is that both the former are relatively straightforward, functioning primarily as documentation. 'Signatures on Timurid paintings, if they are present at all, are usually couched in a formula of humility and self-deprecation, such as "the least of the slaves", the slave in question then declining to name himself. Or they may be "disguised" within the context of an architectural inscription, or further hidden in a written or a visual pun. The most famous, and still most bedevilling, of punning signatures on Iranian works of art is associated with the name of the seventeenth-century painter Muhammad Zaman ibn Hajji Yusuf: *ya sahib al-zaman,* "O Lord of the Age". The reading of others, such as *ya sadiq al-vad,* "O Thou who art True", often depends as much upon a knowledge of contemporary literature, history and religious practices as upon visual connoisseurship.'[127]

[125] Falk 1972, p. 9.
[126] Sims 2002, p. 58.
[127] Sims 2002, p. 59.

It is only from about 1490 that Iranian artists' names begin to be mentioned by contemporary writers. 'Kamal al-Din Bihzad and Amir Ruh Allah Mirak *Naqqash* are the two from whose hands we also have signed paintings. The names of a dozen others stand quite alone, unconnected by documentation to any pictures they may have painted. At this time, too, the sense of a distinct personal style operating within a given set of stylistic conventions begins to be more prevalent'.[128]

Sims further states that 'a better contemporary match between words and images occurs in another later Timurid phenomenon, the "portrait" that truly attempts to render some aspect of the physical reality of the person portrayed. Just as artists' signatures begin to become more frequent on paintings towards the end of the fifteenth century, painted portraits of important contemporary figures also begin to appear'.[129] This is the material that is relevant for my research since it is my intention to look for parallels or differences in the way in which artists use different media, meaning here painting or photography. This relationship between text and painting and the way calligraphy is used in the pictorial work of art is also apparent in nineteenth-century Iranian portrait studio photography. There is, indeed, a remarkable parallel between Persian painting tradition and early Iranian photography.

Together with Falk and Sims, the Iranian art historian Layla Diba belongs to the group of researchers, which pioneered in the field of Qajar painting studies. This field has been historically neglected both by Western and Iranian scholars due probably to the extraordinary interest that most art historians working on the Iranian painting tradition have had on miniature painting. Diba states that 'there is considerable evidence that images, in myriad forms, sizes, and media, played an integral role in the nineteenth-century exercise of power, both at home and abroad. In addition, numerous intriguing references document the widespread use of figurative imagery in popular and court milieus throughout Qajar society for both religious and secular purposes.'[130] Qajar royal paintings are life-size figurative imagery and are much less known and studied by Western scholars than miniatures. Indeed, the study of Persian painting became synonymous with the study of 'miniatures', as illustrations of handwritten manuscripts came to be known. The Islamic art historian B.W. Robinson's statement, "Persia in the nineteenth century was a land of paintings, as never before or since,"[131] may be taken literally. Images in the form of mural paintings were embedded in the fabric of structures located throughout the country. They included portraits; historical, literary and mythological themes; genre, hunting, and battle scenes; and religious subjects. In fact, the entire Persian domain functioned as a lavish stage for images designed to convey the pageantry and splendour of Qajar rule.[132] Members of the Qajar ruling elite soon realized that lithograph portraits and photographs of royal personages and the nobility were capable of serving the same purpose that life-size paintings had fulfilled earlier and began to regard lithographic portraits as a more efficient and economical vehicle for disseminating the royal image. Thus, Royal Qajar painting came to influence the photographic portrait.

As Falk states, the character of Qajar paintings is largely embodied in the subjects that were chosen. These must have always depended upon the choice made by the patron and, understandably, one of the first interests of a patron is himself, a fact amply illustrated by the greatest patron of Qajar painting, Fath`Ali Shah (1798-

[128] Sims 2002, p. 59.
[129] Sims, 2002, p. 59.
[130] Diba 1999, p. 31.
[131] Robinson 1964, p. 96.
[132] Diba 1999, p. 31.

1834).[133] The other main subject, girls, apparently resulted from a desire for decoration that would suit the purpose of the buildings for which the paintings were intended. These girls have various roles: some played a drum, a long-necked mandolin or a guitar, they sometimes danced, etc. We shall discuss this topic further in the next chapters. I have made a more formal analysis of some Persian miniature paintings to illustrate my observations concerning the use of calligraphy in the image. What do those calligraphic inscriptions mean and which functions do they serve?

Men in painting

Sultan-Hussayn Mirza Bayqara, Herat, ca. 1500 (fig. 54), presents an unfinished drawing with a background of solid colour, probably added when it was mounted in the Bahram Mirza Album.[134] The sultan sits on his heels, one hand holding a *mandil,* or handkerchief, on his knee and the other in front of him with a forefinger extended in a speaking gesture; he wears a turban with a plume of black heron feathers. The inscriptions in *Nasta'liq* script are placed in "boxes" at each side of the painting and identify the subject as Sultan-Husayn (left top cartouche) as well as the artist- Ustad Behzad (top right cartouche). In the bottom centre cartouche, we can read in *Naskh* script written with golden colour and placed very much hidden inside a very intricate eslami structure,[135] "Show to me the answer to my letter". These three inscriptions (artist, sitter and text) read, in Farsi:

سمت راست بعمل استاد بهزاد
سمت چپ صورت سلطان حسین میرزا
پایین جواب نامه بنمای از فغفور

In *Seated figure holding a cup,* mid seventeenth century (fig. 55), we can read an inscription in *Nasta'liq* script, a beautiful piece of poetry by one of the great masters of Persian poetry, Omar Khayyam.[136] The poem is a very popular one among Iranians:[137]

هنگام سپیده دم خروس سحری
دانی که چرا همی کند نوحه گری
حکیم عمر خیام

The translation into English reads: "Do you know why the rooster sings a dirge at dawn?". In the frame on the miniature and divided into twelve cartouches, we can read another poem whose author I have not managed to identify:

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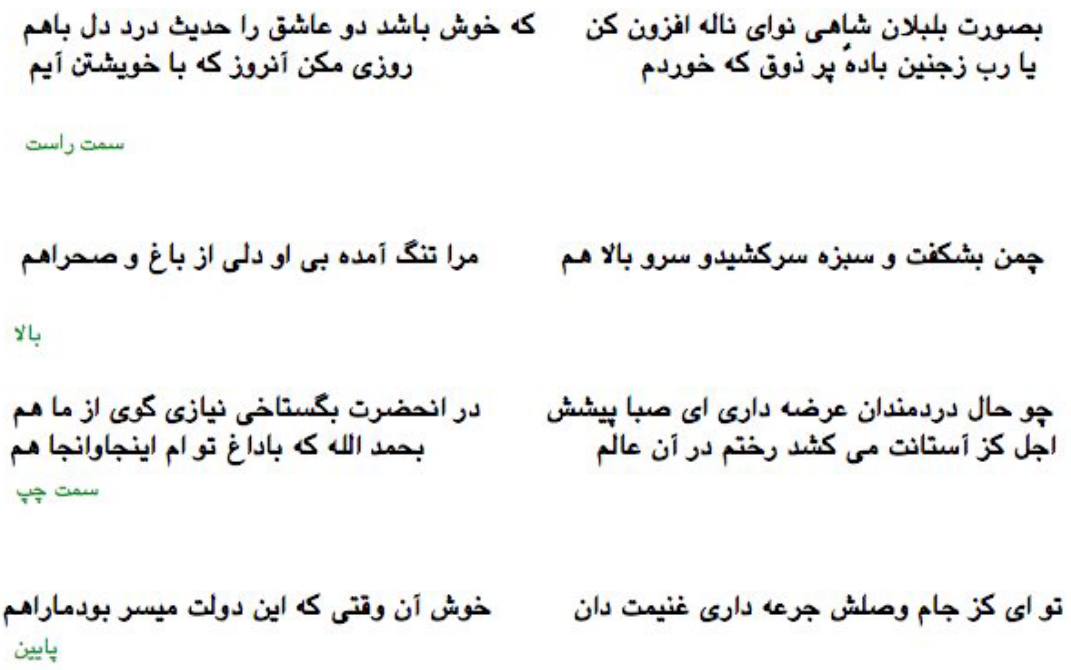
[133] Falk 1972, p. 10.
[134] Sims 2002, p. 270.
[135] Eslami structure is a typical ornamental and decorative background used in Persian minaiture painting.
[136] Omar Khayyam (born in Nishapur, 1048-1122) was a Persian poet, mathematician, philosopher and astronomer. He is believed to have written about thousand four-line verses or quatrains (*rubaai's).* In the English speaking world, he was introduced through *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam,* translated by Edgard Fitzgerald (1809-1883).
[137] Transliteration: *Hengahmeye sepide dam, khurus-e sahari* (top cartouche) / *dani ke chera hami konad nohegari* (bottom cartouche).



Riza-Abbasi painting a picture of a European man, signed by Mu'in Musavvar (fig. 56), who started painting it in 1635 and finished it in 1673, is a well-known work by the leading exponent of the "Isfahan style" in the second half of the seventeenth century. Mu'in's master, the celebrated artist Riza 'Abbasi is shown absorbed in his work with deep serenity. Even though Mu'in has tried to give volume in the treatment of the figure, the titled angle of books and papers conforms to the flatness and stylization of the Persian manuscript mode of painting. The inscription has been written in *Shikasteh* script, and it is quite difficult to read and decipher.[138] The vivid drawing is annotated with long, chatty, and very detailed inscriptions that tell us when, why, and under what circumstances the drawing was made. In this image, we can notice already a change of attitude towards pictorial art and the role of calligraphic inscriptions within its space. This interest in recounting ephemeral was unknown in previous centuries and, therefore, indicates a change of conception in the role of the text within the pictorial space.

The same kind of analysis has been made with Qajar portraits. This group of images have in common that the calligraphic inscriptions give us the same kind of information: person depicted and author. In *Fath`Ali Shah Seated,* 1798 and attributed to Mirza Baba[139] (fig. 57), the inscription in the upper right corner, in *Thuluth* script, reads "Fath`Ali Shah Sultan". The inscriptions in figure 58 are in *Nasta'liq* script on the right-hand corner ("Fath`Ali Shah al-Sultan-i Qajar, 1234) and on the Sun throne reads: "Is this the throne of that of the world-possessing Fath 'Ali Shah/ Or the

[138] Transliteration: *Shahib-i ghufran va rizvan ara makan, marhum-i maghfur ustadam Riza Musavvar `Abbas, mashhur bih Riza `Abbasi-Ashgar bih tarikh-i shahr shaval bih iqbal sanah 1044 Abrang gardideh bud kih dar shahr-i Zu'lqa'deh al-Haram mazkur az dar fana bih `alam baqa rihlat nimud, in sabih ba`d az chihil sal dar chihardahum-i shahr Ramazan al-Mubarak sanah 1804 hasb farmudeh farzandi-yi Muhammad Nasira bih itman risanideh, Mu'in Mussavar, Ghafar 'anhu zunubahu.*

[139] Diba 1999, p. 180.

heavenly thrown of the Lord of the Throne/This elephant of a king, golden-crowned/In whose justice the world is in need."[140] In the stairs to the throne is written these are the stairs to the golden crown king/the king whose justice the world deserves. *Portrait of Fath `Ali Shah Seated,* signed by Mihr `Ali, 1813-14 (fig. 59), presents inscriptions in two different scripts. In *Thuluth* script, to the right of the crown in a cartouche ("*al-Sultan Fath `Ali Shah Qajar*") and in *Nasta'liq* script below in a cartouche, the text reads: "This is the likeness of the King of kings, who is exalted to the Heavens/ Fath `Ali Shah is the ocean of the world".[141] And also in *Nasta'liq* script in the lower left corner ("Raqam-i kamtarin ghulam Mihr `Ali sanah 1229", i.e., "the work of the humble slave Mihr`Ali in the year 1229). In *Fath `Ali Shah in Armor,* signed by Mihr `Ali, 1814-15 (fig. 60), we can see in the upper right corner, in *Nasta'liq* script ("Sultan Fath `Ali Shah Qajar") and in the lower left we can read: "the work of the merest slave Mihr `Ali in the year 1229".[142] Again, this way of placing the inscription identifying sitter and painter, and the kind of script used for that, seems to be very consistent. The last is one of the many examples that can be found of Qajar portraits whose inscription I will analyze, *Apotheosis of Nasir al-Din Shah,* signed by Abu'l Hasan Ghaffari in 1858 (fig. 61). In black *shikasteh-Nasta'liq* script, in the upper cartouche, the inscription identifies both the person depicted (Naser od-Din Shah) and the painter (Abul Hassan Ghaffari Naqqashbashi).[143] This painting exhibits a completely different style from all the previous ones. The image of the ruler conveys his cautious modernity, luxurious tastes and an autocratic but melancholy character. A comparison with the paintings of the rulers executed 10 years earlier, illuminates the new style of painting forged by Abul Hassan (ca. 1814-1866) and his contemporaries: the outmoded hieratic pose, the emphasis on jewelled decoration and weaponry have been discarded in favour of an informal seated pose set against a plain ground. Especially interesting is the contrast of this painting and the portraits of Fath `Ali Shah that I have just analyzed. In common they have, though, that once more the name and the titles of the person depicted are in the upper position and the name of the artist in a lower place. Nevertheless, the prestige of the painter's signature seems to have raised its category in contrast with earlier decades, since its place it is not so difficult to locate and, as far as the way of presenting the signature, it even has the same treatment as the calligraphy used to identify the king, since both are placed within the same decorative cartouche.

It is striking that consistently among the paintings analyzed for this section, the inscription that reveals the identity of the sitter has been placed on the top right corner (quite close to the poseur's head) and the inscription that reveals the identity of the painter, his signature, has been placed exactly on the opposite side of the diagonal, meaning on the bottom left, in the furthest possible place to the first inscription! In some cases it is so hidden that it is very difficult to locate: under the chair where the poseur is sitting, next to the edge of the carpet. Further, the majority of the Qajar

[140] Transliteration: *In takht dara-yi-jahan-i Fath`Ali Shah ast/ ya 'arsh ast ba an malik-i `arsh-ahang; In pileh-i shah-i zarrintaj ast/shani kih jahan bi-`adl muhtaj ast.*

[141] Transliteration: *Timsal-i shahanshah-i falakjah ast in, ya tal'at mihr u paykar mah ast in / Timsal nigar kih har kih binad fuyad, darya-yi jahan-i Fath `Ali Shah ast in.*

[142] Transliteration: *raqam-i kamtarin ghulam Mihr `Ali fi sanah 1230.*

[143] Transliteration: *Al-Sultan, ibn al-Sultan, ibn al-Sultan Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar Khaldallah mulkuhu* and in the lower cartouche *raqam-i Abu'l Hassan Ghaffari Naqqashbashi; tahir fi shahr rajab, marhama sanah 1275.*

portraits analyzed for this chapter use the *Thuluth* script for the name of the person depicted and the *Nasta'liq* script for the name of the artist. Since *Thuluth* is considered the most important of all ornamental scripts, the fact that the painter uses this script to identify the sitter may have the intention to show the social status of the person depicted. Also, the way in which the painter arranges this kind of calligraphic ornament and information in the pictorial space is very interesting and seems to follow some kind of aesthetic and/or symbolic rules. The name of the person depicted, in this case always Shahs, princes and noblemen of lesser rank, is placed in the upper part of the painting, whereas the name of the painter finds its place in the lower corners of the painting. This seems to follow also the rules of the Qajar courts as far as social status and hierarchy are concerned. So both the type of script and where it is placed seems to be directly linked with hierarchical rules of Qajar society.

My hypothesis regarding the inconspicuous places where the signatures are normally placed in Qajar paintings is supported by Blair's research on signatures in all kinds of objects. She states that in bowls, for example, 'they are often found on the plain outside or under the foot. On a box, they can come between the straps or under the clasp.' She significantly states further that 'the inconspicuous location was deliberately chosen to show the humility of the artist, particularly in contrast to the lofty patron or recipient, whose name is usually inscribed earlier or in amore prominent place and often written in a different script.'[144] This is what I have concluded in the previous paragraph after analysing an important number of Qajar paintings. Blair continues that 'tiles show the same juxtaposition, and the artist is typically identified as " a low slave" in contrast to his lordly patron. This identification should be taken metaphorically: these workers were not necessarily slaves and were often quite well known individuals who worked in high-status professions'.[145] She states that 'signatures on objects are typically introduced by the word *'amal* ("work of"). The verb *sana'a* was used for higher-status or more meticulous work. Artisans who signed their names with *'amal* on metal bowls and other objects, for example, used *sana'a* on astrolabes and other scientific instruments'.[146] It would be interesting to explore if this holds true for nineteenth century Iranian photography and I will devote sometime to this topic in the next section.

Related to the spatial arrangement of the signature/inscription within the pictorial and photographic space, I would like to reflect about the visual laterality phenomenon analyzed in chapter one of this book. I wonder if the fact that the inscription is placed at the right or at the left of the sitter may be related somehow with the direction of the script, with the phenomenon of visual laterality. Consistently, the main text that reveals the identity of the person depicted in Qajar paintings is placed at the top right corner next to the sitter's face (see figures 53, 57, 58, 59 and 60). This agrees with the basic rules of Iranian graphic design that place the text on the right side of the page and the photograph on the left side: following the direction of reading in Farsi, the text is found first and the image that illustrates the text in a second place, at the left of the text. An accessible way to see this difference on graphic design due to the visual laterality phenomenon is to visit Iranian websites that have a Persian version and an English one: we can immediately notice this mirror-like composition between the two possibilities. See, as an interesting example, the website of the Golestan

[144] Blair 1998, p. 100.
[145] Blair 1998, p. 100.
[146] Blair 1998, p. 101.

Palace where the biggest photo-archive of nineteenth-century Iranian photography is hosted: http://www.golestanpalace.ir

Women in painting

I would like to introduce a couple of examples of typical images of women. Most of the portraits painted by artists during the Qajar era were men. Nevertheless, there are enough portraits of women to deserve a close analysis of them and focus on the use of calligraphic inscriptions in these artworks. After a period of research on this topic, I have found that, interestingly enough, no calligraphic inscriptions are to be found in those works of art except, and not always, the signature of the painter. Since they are idealizations of women, no further identification is found, and this seems to be the reason for the lack of further calligraphic inscriptions. Therefore, the treatment of the portraits of women and those of men is different when it comes to the presence and meaning of calligraphic inscriptions. In *A Tipsy Lady* (fig. 62), we can read in the *Nasta'liq* script in the right center: *raqam-i kamtarin Mirza Babah, sanah 1215*, which identifies Mirza Baba as the author of the painting and the date in which it was done. The woman is an unknown and idealized one, sitting on a typical Persian carpet and shows all the beauty attributes of Qajar women: her moon-faced visage, joined eyebrows, bow-shaped eyes and flower-bud mouth. In her right hand, she holds an apple and in her left a glass of wine. Both of these attributes act as visual poetic metaphors since, in Persian culture, apples represent love and fruitfulness and wine represents earthly and divine love. In *A woman balancing on a knife* (fig. 63), the acrobat's body is flattened against the picture plane and performing some impossible acrobatic exercises that challenge all the laws of gravity and perspective. There is just one inscription placed between the face of the woman and the watermelon, the word *Khatun,* which means dame or lady. Here, as in many others such pictures that I have analyzed, not even the signature of the painter is to be found. This probably has to do with the fact that these artworks were executed merely for decorative purposes and that they were not considered as important and valuable as those of the men that mostly depicted Shahs and princes. For a painter, this kind of women portraits probably would not give any status, whereas the fact that he would paint a portrait of the ruler of the dynasty would immediately give him some extra value. This is especially interesting because it illustrates my point that women in Qajar portraiture were mere abstractions, idealizations and therefore, in any case are not or can not be identified. This is a remarkable difference again in contrast to the portraits of men that present calligraphic inscriptions with good factual information about both the person depicted and the painter.

Illumination

There is an interesting aspect of the use of calligraphy in photography that has also been inherited from its use in Persian miniature painting: illumination. The sumptuous and meticulous art of illumination of manuscript title pages, headings, verse division, dedications, borders and book covers, had its origin, in the words of the Islamic art historian Norah Titley, 'in the simple decoration of vowel marks and ornamentation of the circles separating the verses of Qur'ans written in the seventh and eight centuries by Arab calligraphers. By the fourteenth century, ornate palmettes and sunbursts decorated the borders of Qur'ans and the arabesque, which developed from an origin as simple as that of the border decorations had become indivisible from

Islamic decoration'.[147] The Persian illuminators with their strong sense of pattern and colour and their creativity in design brought the art of illumination to a peak. As in miniature painting, every period and every atelier had its distinctive personal style of manuscript illumination. The designs of the illuminator were not confined to the text pages but were also incorporated in details within miniatures, on textiles, tents, architecture, carpets and also in photographs, as we shall see shortly in the next section with a couple of clear examples of the many to be found. Lotus petal and flower design (fig. 64) from a page in Ferdawsi's *Shahnama* is a beautiful example of illumination in the Persian Inju style of Shiraz and is dated from the middle fourteenth century. The next example is a whirling arabesque design and illuminated page decoration (fig. 65) from *Ghara'ib al-sighar* by Nava'i made around 1520-30. We will see later on the similitude between these examples of illumination of pages of albums or books and those made in nineteenth-century Iranian photographs.

In sum, I can state that the function of the calligraphic inscriptions used in Persian painting has, as we have seen through the analysis of the works selected, not only an aesthetic but also an informative purpose: to state clearly who the person depicted is, and the author of the particular work of art. Sometimes, other kinds of inscriptions can be found, like pieces of poetry or philosophical thoughts, but those are not as widely used as the previous ones, at least in Qajar portraiture. I can also conclude that it seems that different authors follow the same pattern of implementing calligraphic inscriptions within the pictorial space, in both content and composition. Hierarchy in Iranian society has a great influence on the unique usage of these informative texts (i.e. to inscribe the name of the subject above the name of author.) This is all valid if we take into consideration male portraiture, but in the case of female portraiture, the situation is different since these artworks are in most of the cases unsigned and without any other kind of calligraphic inscriptions.

2.3. Text and Nineteenth-century Iranian portrait studio photography

The main research focus of this section is whether the use, function and meaning of text or calligraphic inscriptions in nineteenth-century Iranian photography have been inherited from the Persian painting tradition. To establish parallels and differences is the aim of this chapter. Other questions that I pose in this section are whether the use of text in the photographic space is something unique, and therefore, defining of nineteenth-century Iranian photography or if it is to be found in nineteenth-century photography in other countries. I will consider also Japanese and Indian photography to explore the use of text or calligraphy in the nineteenth-century in these two countries.

It is fundamental to remark here that when analyzing the text that is present in nineteenth-century Iranian photography, we find several degrees of elaboration in those inscriptions to the point that we have to be very cautious on how we use the words calligraphy or text, since in some cases the inscription is just a plane text that can not be named calligraphy due to the lack of elaboration and the lack of decorative purpose, even if it has been written neatly or beautifully. As pointed out by Just Jan Witkam, photography was mainly an elite pastime. It is in that context that we must appreciate and judge the neat or beautiful texts on the photographs. In some cases,

[147] Titley 1983, p. 229.

there is no practical purpose and therefore is easier to see this as calligraphy.[148] Nevertheless, what is common to all of them, and this is especially relevant for my research, is that they are implemented in the photographic space in a similar way as they were implemented in the Persian miniatures and, even more clearly, as in the Qajar portrait paintings. There are three possible ways of classifying the photographs selected for this chapter: by the grade of elaboration of the script; by the content and meaning of the inscription; and by the way in which the inscription has been implemented on the photographic space. For the first classification, I have defined three groups: plain text, calligraphy-like and illumination. For the second classification I have defined two groups: factual information and poetic or symbolic meaning. The third classification includes two groups: framed/organized and freely written on the photographic space. The first and second classifications can also be identified and related to either decorative purpose (which includes both calligraphy-like and symbolic or poetic meaning) or practical purpose (which includes both text and factual information).

Elaboration of the script and, content and meaning of the inscriptions

In this sub-section I will focus only on the analysis of the elaboration of the script and the content and meaning of the inscriptions written in the photographs. The meaning of the inscriptions can be categorized in two groups: factual information and/or symbolic or philosophical meaning. All the photographs selected here present, in different degrees, both types of information. In the next sub-section I will analyze further the photographs selected here from the spatial arrangement of text within the photographic space.

As the photo historian Rod Slemmons states, 'meaning goes into pictures and has to be re-extracted through close observation. It goes into words and must be released by reading. But it is actually more complicated than it seems on the surface'. The game of placing words and images in the same perceptual space, either combined in the picture, or side-by-side, is not an easy one to play, as many have discovered. 'Firstly, the artists have to keep track of four phenomena, not just the apparent two: 1. The words have accepted, coded meanings and contexts that affect what we see. The same image next to two texts is seen in two different ways. 2. The words invoke mental images that might conflict with what we see. Language was invented to abbreviate and explicate the visual world - words enter our brains on the back of images. 3. All photographs have meanings based on context, which may alter our engagement with them. 4. Images invoke words in the mind of the viewer. Images enter the brain on the backs of words. The choreography of image/word/word/image is not easy to score. The more difficult it is, the more possibilities there are for qualifying or clarifying the larger world that is their source'.[149] If we are taking in consideration photographs with calligraphic inscriptions that we cannot decipher, then that choreography image/word/word/image is even more difficult to analyze. But, interestingly, since we can not know the meaning of the words used, the text will not affect the perception of the photograph as a whole in the same way that would happen among Iranian observers.

[148] E-mail exchange in February 2009. I am gratefull to Just Jan Witkam for his remarks concerning this matter and for his valuable help with the translation of several of the Persian and Arabic texts written in the photographs selected for this chapter.

[149] Slemmons 2004, pp. 43-44.

As the Czech philosopher Vilém Flusser points out, 'images are not "denotative" (unambiguous) complexes of symbols (like numbers, for example), but "connotative" (ambiguous) complexes of symbols: they provide space for interpretation'.[150] Interpretation on a layering basis, especially in the case of inscriptions within the photographic space considered here, since the inscriptions are illegible for non-Iranian observers.

The first group that I have established taking in consideration the elaboration of the script, **plain text,** is formed by images like the portrait of Crown Prince Mozaffar od-Din Shah (fig. 66), and we can see an interesting use of text in the photographic space. There is an inscription in *Nasta'liq* script that is placed on four cartouches on each corner of the image. It is a piece of poetry about the young man depicted in this portrait:

این عکس که در قالب دولت جان است
تمثال ولیعهدفلک دربان است

سلطان جهان مظفرالدین شاه
کامروز خدیو خطه ایران است

Interestingly, the inscription is a poem about the sitter that gives us at the same time factual information about him. The poem has been written for this photograph and this is an interesting element that we can find in other photographs selected for this chapter: a poem is written about the personality and/or ocupation of the sitter and it is placed on the photographic surface. The inscription reads (free translation): "This portrait that is so real/ the face of this prince takes care of the whole world." (upper two cartouches) and further "The King of the world is Mozzafer al-Din Shah/ that is also now *Javid* (the immortal) of the country Iran" (bottom two cartouches). This portrait presents the typical pose used by court photographers and we can find many examples like this one when going through the albums of Naser od-Din Shah and his family hosted at Palace Golestan Library. The pose has been inherited from the Qajar portrait paintings of Fath 'Ali Shah and Naser od-Din Shah, as I will show in the chapter of this book devoted to the pose in nineteenth-century Iranian portrait studio photography.

The next photograph (fig. 67) depicts the poet Habib Gha'ani. The inscription, in *Nasta'liq* script, in the upper left corner, is one of his poems of autobiographical content:

قاآنی ارزپافتاده است عیب نیست
نیکوقویست دست توانا خدای او
قاآنی از گنه چوهراسد بروزحشر
بی پرسش بخلد بر نداروای تو

[150] Flusser 2000, p. 8.

The text speaks about the weaknesses, lack of energy and fears of the poet and how they are taken in care by God. The photograph belongs to the private collector Iraj Afshar and was given to his father, Mahmoud Afshar, as a present from Mohamad Hasane Madudel Sulta Azi in 1961 as it is written on the back of the photograph. Again, the cushion behind the sitter's back, the water-pipe, the traditional kneeling pose and the inscription result in an image that resembles fully that of miniature studios.

In Shiraz there was a family of photographers that was very active in the last part of nineteenth and the beginning of twentieth-centuries. The first photographer of this family was Mirza Hassan 'Akkasbashi (1853-1916), who was active from around 1870. An interesting photograph taken by this photographer presents a group of poets from Shiraz (fig. 68) in 1894. Under and above each of them, we can read their names: four are kneeling in the traditional pose and eight are sitting on chairs. This photograph is also arranged in miniature style with inscriptions placed in cartouches above and under the image. In plain and clear *Nasta'liq* script we can read a poem:

تبارک الله از این صفحه خجسته مثال
بغیر من همه نیکو نهاد و نیک خصال
زابتدای یمین تا با نتهای شمال
مسخرش بود ازفیض ایزد متعال

که کلک صنع نبندد دگر چنین تمثال
بپیش کرسی یک رسته کرده اند فعود
یکی نثار بود بخردی که بر نظمش
دگر حکیم سخندان جناب آسوده

نیاورند دگر چار مام وهفت پدر
خلاف من همه روشندل وشگرف سکال
نثار کردن جان است افضل الاعمال
که سوده بر قدمش هر لبیب روی سوال

یکی چو این ده و دوازدگان بفضل و کمال
تو را که ناظر این مجلسی اگریابد
دگر بصیرخردمند حضرت قدسی
دگر منم یک از ایشان که فرصتم خوانند

خبر زجمله القاب این بزرگ...
که هست پایه قدرش برون ز...
ولی به درگهشان کمتر از...

دگر وحیدزمان فیلسوف دانشور
..ون زچارتن دیگرارنشان خواهی
دگر فریفته دل شیفته که چون خورشید

صدیق نیک سیر صادق عدیم مثال
بدان وتیره وترتیب گویمت فی الحال
بود رفیع مکان بر سپهر عزو جلال

دگرنوا که بود تاج فرق اهل سخن
مظفر است نخستین که اندراین میدان
دگرفصیحی آن شاعر فصیح زبان

بجای نظم فشاند گهر زدرج مقال
مظفر است بهر کوست خصم زشت فعال
که در محامدو اوصاف اوست ناطقه لال

دگر شعاع که طبع بلند روشن اوست
دگرحسن که بطبع حسان و خط حسن
به حرف اول القابشان فرارجبی

چو آفتاب فروزان...
کسش نبوده نظیر...
که تا بدانی تاریخ...

حرزه العبد العاصی علی نقی الشیرازی فی شهر الله الاعظم رمضان المبارک سنه ۱۳۱۵

The Iranian poet Abdol-Asi Ali Naghi al-Shirazi is the author of this poem, whose content is a poetic exhaltation of the good personal qualities of each one of the poets depicted in the photograph. The Iranian photo historian and collector Mansour Sane states in his book *Photography in Shiraz* that a photographer without some knowledge of poetry would be incomplete just in the same way a poet ignorant of images would be.[151] Iran is a land of poets and visual artists, and often both literary and artistic traditions are so intermingled that it is impossible to understand them properly as independent artistic expressions. Therefore, the aforementioned statement makes sense in this context, but it does not in a Western context. Poetry is deeply rooted in the Iranian culture's subconscious and impregnates with its metaphoric language all the visual arts. As stated by Blair, 'Persian verses became standard decoration on many other types of art made in Iran from the twelfth century onwards…. Some verses were taken from well-known poets, others were compossed for the occasion''.[152] This agrees fully with the conclusion that I have reached after analyzing the text on several photographs. Persian verses were also used in textiles and even in carpets, like the Arbadil carpets, one hosted at the Victorian and Albert Museum in London and the other hosted at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.[153] Blair presents an interesting example of a silk dated to the twelfth century in the Boston

[151] Sane 1991, p.2.
[152] Blair 1998, p. 98.
[153] For a detailed study of the Ardabil carpets and the inscriptions written on them, see: Stead, Rexford, *The Ardabil Carpets,* The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California, 1974.

Museum of Fine Arts that has a Persian quatrain. 'Composed for the occasion, the verse is written in the first person as though the textile were speaking.' She states further that 'Persian poetry became increasingly popular on objects from the fifteenth century onwards. The Persian verses were drawn from a wide repertory of classical poets, such as Daqiqi, Firdawsi, Sa'adi and Hafiz. The text also refers to the objects on which they are inscribed'.[154] The photograph that I am analyzing now is a good example of Sane's statement. In this case, a poem has been especially written about the persons depicted on the photograph and it is, therefore, also a good example to illustrate Blair's statements introduced above. The Iranian writer Mina Zandi Siegel has translated the poem for me and it reads:

Praise The Lord of this land, a byword for goodness,
All graceful and good natured, aside from myself.
From the far South to the extreme North,
All has been under His Majesty's rule, by the grace of the Most High.

No artist's brush could create such an image,
A row of servants have humbled themselves near his throne.
One is Nessar,[155] with the wisdom of his poetry.
The other, His Honor Asoudeh,[156] the most learned and lucid,

The Four Mothers and Seven Fathers[157] will not bring about such again
But for me, all luminous of heart and profound of thought.
Sacrificing ones life being the most virtuous action,
So all the learned rubbed their imploring faces on his feet.

"If you, oh viewer of this group, would know
Those ten and twelve wise and learned,
One is the discerning, wise, His Excellency Ghodsi,
The other is myself, who is called Forsat.

Knowledge of all the titles of this great...
The fame of the basis of his grandeur exceeds all limit ,...
But yet in his court is less than...

One is Vahid-Zaman, philosopher and scholar.
And if you want to know the names of the other four,
One is Shifteh,[158] his heart seduced, radiant as sun,.....

The other, true Sadeq, of good past, beyond compare,
Whose manner and education I shall tell you at length.
My he hold the loftiest place in Mighty and Glorious Heaven.

Another is Nava, who is a crown to groups of the cultured,
The prime victor in this field.

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[154] Blair 1998, p. 98.
[155] Sacrifice
[156] Calm
[157] The earth and the heavens.
[158] Love-struck

Another is Fassihi,[159] that poet of eloquent tongue,

Who strikes such verses that gems emerge from his speech.
He vanquishes every evil-doing foe,
For jeweled speech is in of his meritorious qualities.

Another one is Sho'a,[160] whose lofty nature is brilliant,
Another Hasan,[161] the elegant calligrapher,
With matching nature peerless in time.

Like the blazing sun...
No one is their peer,...
History stands a witness...

Composed by Abdol-Asi Ali Naghi al-Shirazi, in Great God's month of Ramezan, on the blessed date of 1315".

Another interesting photograph with inscriptions is a portrait of Khojatoleslam Balmuslemin Agha-ye Seyyed Mohammad Mojtahed Tabatabai (fig. 69), an important figure of the Constitutional Period.[162]

فطوغراف
بندکان حضرت مستطاب
ابو الارامل والایتام رکن
الملة والدین حجة الاسلم والمسلمین
اقای اقا میرزا سید محمد مجتهد
طباطبائی ذابت
افاضاته

The inscription is written in clear *Thuluth* script and starts with a phrase that reads (in a very symbolic way) that the person depicted is a servant of the Mahdi (the 12th Imam for the Shia).[163] The exact translation of the text written in this photograph was

[159] Eloquent
[160] Effulgence
[161] Handsome
[162] The Iranian Constitutional Revolution took place between 1905 and 1911. The Revolution led to the establishment of a parliament in Iran. The system of constitucional monarchy created by the decree of Mozzafar-al-Din Shah that was established in Persia as a result of the Revolution ultimately came to an end in 1925 with the dissolution of the Qajar Dynasty and the ascensión of Reza Shah Pahlavi to the throne. Tabatabata'i was a very important religiuos constitutionalist. Further reading: *History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution: Tarikhe Mashrute-ye Iran,* Volume I, translated into English by Evan Siegel, Mazda Publications, Costa Mesa, California, 2006.
[163] According to Twelver Shi'as Imam Hujjat al-Mahdi (or Hujjat ibn Hasan ibn Ali) is the twelfth Imam and the Mahdi, the ultimate savior of humankind. Other Shi'a schools adhere to different Imam successions and do not, along with Sunnís, consider ibn-Al-Hasan the Mahdi. Shi'as believe that for several reasons, God concealed the twelfth and current Shi'a Imam, al-Mahdi, from humankind. They believe that al-Mahdi will reappear when the World has fallen into chaos and war and that he will bring justice and peace to the World. Further reading: Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy,* translated by Liadain Sherrard and Philip Sherrard, Kegan Paul Internacional, 1993.

done by Witkam is: Photograph/ (of) the most excellent person/ father of widows and orphans, pillar/ of the state and the religion, proof of Islam and the muslims/ Mr. Agha Mirza Sayyid Muhammad the *mugtahid/* Tabatabai, may increase/ his overflowings.[164]

The second group, **calligraphy-like,** is composed by images such as the one taken by the Iranian photographer Mohhamad Abdol-Ghassem Nuri (fig. 70). It is one of the nineteenth-century Iranian photographs that show in a clearer way the relationship between calligraphy/text, poetry, painting and photography, since it presents several typical Iranian elements inherited from the Persian painting tradition. In the upper part of the photograph we can see three groups of inscriptions, all of them in *Naskhi* script. Here we can appreciate that the script has been written in a much more elaborated way than in the previous examples, with a more noticeable deformation of the letters and with a more free understanding of the space (some words are placed above or under the main line of the inscription). The main inscription is:

خلق میبیند تصویر یکسبر جای
غافلند از یک جهان معنی که در تصویر است

If I analyze the inscriptions in the portrait of this kneeling mullah, then in the right cartouche we can read "photo of Hojjatoleslam" and in the left cartouche "Fazel Sharbiani Edamelboje", i.e. the person depicted in the photograph is being identified, exactly as in the Qajar portraits and in some miniatures, as noted above. The inscription in the upper center is a philosophical poem, a reflection about the importance of the meaning of the image beyond its mere form, its mere outer appearance. The inscription reads (free-translation): „the people see his image/ without noticing the deep meaning that underlies it". Finally, one can read in the lower inscription, also in *Naskhi* script, "the work ofthe photographer Mohammad Abdol-Ghassem Nuri, taken in the year 1305". Here, interestingly, the word *'amal* has been used to introduce the signature on the photograph, as it is traditionally done on objects, as I have already mentioned before (see page 51). This is an interesting parallel in the way the inscriptions have been placed in all kinds of objects and in photography. Further below, I will introduce other examples. The pose of the man depicted here, the traditional kneeling one inherited from the miniature portraits, together with the paraphernalia (cushions behind the back, the Persian carpet and the *tasbi* that the mullah is holding) result in an image that fully resembles the studies of Persian miniatures. The main inscription is the one that is especially relevant for my research because it has some deep philosophical message, which stresses the difference between form and meaning. As stated by the historian of religion and philosophy Herni Corbin (1903-1978), the duality between *surat* (form) and *ma'ni* (meaning) can be related to the Sufi notion of *zahir,* "the exterior" and *batin,* "the interior", as well as to the Zoroastrian complementary opposition between *menok* and *getik*. Every creature has a double nature: *getik*, the terrestrial, opaque, heavy, and *menok,* the ethereal, transparent, subtle.[165] Further, in words of the scholar Johann Christoph Bürgel, for the mystic spectator, all earthly beauty points to the Divine, and by this very fact all the phenomena of creation transcend themselves, turn into

[164] Words in red means here not well legible.
[165] Corbin 1960, p. 32.

symbols, which by their outward appearance (*zahir,* exterior, form) veil and, at the same time partly unveil, an inner meaning (*batin,* interior, *ma'ni,* meaning), point to a higher layer of existence.[166]

The relationship between onward form and inner essence is treated directly in the writings of the great Iranian poet Ghazali (1059-111) on the nature of beauty. In the words of the Islamic art historian Priscilla Soucek, 'Ghazali discusses several types of beauty and the manner in which they are perceived by the senses in an ascending progression that moves from the beauty of man to that of the creation and finally focuses on how to define God's beauty. The faculty of sight and the related skill of visual imagination are important aspects of this process. The eye is attracted to beauty and takes pleasure from its perception'.[167] In the same way, another great Sufi poet, Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi (Konya, 1207-1273), acknowledges the power of images and stresses their inherent limitations. I have looked for books written by Iranian photographers in nineteenth-century, but in the first years after the invention of photography only books written by Western photographers were translated from French or English into Persian. In a later stage, the Iranian photographers started printing their own books written from their own perception of the new medium. A book that is especially interesting for this topic that deals with a philosophical and religious perception of the image, is *Aksieye Hashrye,* a 56 pages book written in the time of Naser od-Din Shah by the photographer Mohammad-devne Ali Maskute al-Molk.[168]

The next photograph (fig. 71) also presents two inscriptions in elaborated *Naskhi* script. The upper one, interestingly enough, is the same poem that was used in figure 70. I found this image in a different book from the one in which the first was found. In this second one, the author of the photograph is not identified by the author of the book or by any inscription in the photograph. But it could be that the photo is also mounted on a frame like the previous one and perhaps the inscription identifying the author is to be found there. In any case, I believe that the maker of this second photograph is the same as that of the first one, Abdol-Ghassem Nuri, not only because he uses the same poem but also because of the subject (full portrait of a mullah) and the way he uses the inscriptions. In the lower inscription we can read "photo of the dead Mirza-ye Sharestani, in 1315 Ghamari", identifying in this way the sitter. The pose of the man depicted is not a traditional one but a typical Victorian sitting pose. The table has been also introduced in the studio and it is covered with a Iranian tablecloth. On top of it we can see several books with the intention to mark the high education level of the mullah depicted. One of the most interesting elements of this photograph is the folded curtain on the right side, an element that was introduced to Qajar portrait painting due to Western influence and later on also in photography, as we can see in this example.

Mohammad Abdol-Ghassem Nuri took the next photograph as well (fig. 72), as we can read in the inscription, which is in *Naskhi* script under the feet of the person depicted. The rest of the photograph is framed by one inscription in *Nasta'liq* script just as they are in miniatures. This is especially interesting since the inscriptions have been placed in clouds, exactly like in the illuminations (see fig. 65). In this image, it is

[166] Bürgel 1975, pp. 34-38.
[167] Soucek 2000, p. 102.
[168] I am grateful to Mohammad Reza Tahmasbpour for helping me with this matter and for giving me digital copies of this book.

fundamental to be able to see the original, since the image is quite faded away and it may be a photograph that has been painted afterwards, since its appearance is more like a watercolour than a naked photograph. Also it could be a photograph of a typical painting of the period, known as *tasvir-e ghalamí,* made in a very realistic approach to the subject, influenced by the new technique of photography. After a conversation with the Iranian photo historian Mohammad Reza Tahmasbpour in September 2008, it seems that the image is a photograph of a painting, as he stated after seeing the original. In the Golestan Palace Library, there is one album (number 461) with 28 photographs taken by Mohammad Abdol-Ghassem Nuri, which includes this image. The text in Farsi reads (first the inscription on the right side of the image, second on the top of the image, third on the left side and finally the inscription on the bottom):

سمت راست

..... غیر قابل رویت می باشد .....
صورت پذیر گردد اگر فیض دادگر

..... غیر قابل رویت می باشد .....
خیزند جمله از پی تعظیم تو صور

بالا

...ر مملکت گشا امین ملک پادشاه
...یمن دین مصطفی ضیمن رزق خوارها

یگانه صدر محترم مهین امیر محتشم
اتابک شه عجم امین شهریارها

سمت چپ

کاری که این امیر درین روزگار کرد
این روزگار فخر بروز شمار کرد

گویند شد نگین سلیمان شکار دیو
این دیوهای دولت شه را شکار کرد

پایین

صورت جناب صدارت نصاب وزارت مآب امیر لشگروزیر
کشور قوام عظمت واجلال نظام وحشمت اقبال
... معظم وزیر اشرف مغخم اتابک اعظم شخص اول ایران میرزا تقی خان
امیر نظام بااحتشام در سن چهل وپنج سالگی

On the left, upper and right part of this frame, we can read a poem about the sitter, Amir Kabir (d. 1852).[169] In the lower part of this frame, the photographer gives some biographical information about Amir Kabir, with his whole title, and indicates that the photograph was taken when he was 45 years old.

We can see a clear parallel between the way of identifying the person depicted and the author in Iranian paintings and photographs, and that is one of the clearest and most defining Iranian elements of nineteenth-century Iranian photography and it demonstrates an influence of the Iranian painting tradition on the photographic space.
Who wrote the calligraphic inscriptions on the photographs? It could have been a calligrapher or illuminator, or maybe the photographer himself. Tahmasbpour states that, the inscription on the photograph was written by a calligrapher or illuminator.[170] This is, again, an interesting parallel between Persian miniature paintings and photographs, since in the pictorial works the calligraphic inscriptions were also implemented by calligraphers or illuminators. It also shows that some Iranian photographers, like Abdol-Ghassem Nuri, who were more exposed to their own traditions, were working somehow under the guild-like tradition as was done in the ateliers of painters and calligraphers.

The image of an unknown dervish (fig. 73) is interesting for this research. This image shows that the continuation of the tradition of illuminating paintings with poems did find its way into photography. Interestingly, two different kind of scripts have been used: in the inner frame the inscription is written in *Naskhi,* which is the script that was normally used to write Qur'anic verses as it is the case here, and the inscription in the outer frame has been written in *Nastal'iq* script for the inscription in the outer frame. Both inscriptions have been written in a very elaborated way. In the outer frame, a poem about the figure of the dervishes and their philosophy has been written.

Nos. 1-4. Upper outer frame

1 یا حنان

2 خلوتي در سراي دروشان

3 بطلب از خداي دروشان

4 یا منان

Nos. 5-8. Lower outer frame

5 یا دیان

6 در جهان بهر لقمهء باشند

7 پادشاهان كداي دروشان

8 یا سبحان

[169] Amir Kabir was the prime minister of Naser od-Din Shah.
[170] Tahmabspour 2001, p. 28.

Nos. 9-10. Right outer frame

9 ستر لي نيست در جهان حقرا

10 جز دل با صفاي دروشان

Nos. 11-12. Left outer frame

11 سر وجانم فداي انكه بود

12 سر وجانش فداي دروشان

No. 13. Inner frame, right-bottom-left

13 الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم لا تاخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما في السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذييشفع عنده الا بإذنه يعلم ما بين ايديهم وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشيء من علمه الا بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا يؤديه حفظهما وهو العلى العظيم لا إكراه في الدين

No. 14. Inner frame, top

14 يا علي يا ابليا يا با حسن يا با تراب ادركني

In this case, the photograph seems to have the function to illustrate the text, like happens in the miniatures. The inscription reads (outer frame): Pray for solace in the dervishes' abode / to the God of the dervishes / in the world has Truth no abode / other than in the pure hearts of the dervishes / For the tiniest morsels in this world / must kings beg for the dervishes / my body and soul be sacrified / to him whose body and soul is sacrified to the dervishes.[171] In the inner frame of the photograph, we can read several verses from the Qur'an, precisely the one known as the Throne Verse (2:255 and beginning only of 2:256). The translation by Witkam reads:
2.225: Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Everliving, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist; slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep; whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission? He knows what is before them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases, His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of them both tires Him not, and He is the Most High, the Great.
2.256: There is no compulsion in religion; …. (Throne Verse, in the Shakir translation).
Oh, 'Ali!, oh, Abliya! (=?); oh, Father of Hasan!; oh, Father of Turab! (=?), take me.

As stated by Witkam in the course of an e-mail exchange in February 2008, the Throne Verse is one of the most popular Qur'anic quotations. It is often seen in inscriptions in buildings or on objects (ceramics or the like). He noted that Sheila Blair in the index of her book *Islamic Inscriptions* has a considerable number of references to *sura* 2:255. It is by far the most frequente Qur'anic quotation mentioned by Blair.[172] In the case of the Throne Verse, there is no practical purpose in its use on

[171] Translation taken from Damandan 2004, p. 154.
[172] Blair 1998. Witkam went through the index to find those references: p 69: common on mosques; p 73: part of a limited repertoire of Qur'anic texts on buildings; p 74: Fatimid inscription on walls of Cairo; p 80: on a minaret in Tirmidh; p 137: inscription in wood in Beyshehir; p 139: on the Qala'un mosque in Cairo; p 147: on a walnut chest (to contain a Qur'an); pp. 156-57: on tiles; pp. 195-96; and pp. 213-215: as a Qur'anic used most on objects.

a photograph and therefore is easier to see it as calligraphy than in other cases where the text gives us plain factual information.

Another photograph that also illustrates the mystical meaning of images that I have introduced above while analysing the portrait of the constitutionalist Tabatabatai is a portrait of the Iranian photographer Mirza Mohammad-Rahim Akkasbashi (fig. 74), taken by the Iranian photographer Amir Seyyed Mohammad Reza Khan al-Hosseini. This image is interesting because we can find two different ways of implementing inscriptions within the photographic space: the first one is the traditional Persian way of using text/calligraphy within the pictorial space, the cursive flowing freely and harmoniously in the space and the second one using one piece of paper to frame the text (notice the Kodak piece of paper where the name of the photographer is written: Amir Seyyed Mohammad Reza Khan al-Hoseini). In the left side of the photograph just above the sitter's elbow we can read a poem written by the photographer himself that again constitutes a mystical reflection about the role and meaning of the image:

غرض نقشی است کز ماباز ماند
که هستی را نمی بینم بقایی
مگر صاحب دلی روزی برحمت
کند در حق اینجانب دعایی

میرزامحمد رحیم عکاسباشی چهره نگار ۱۳۰۶

In this photograph, a free translation of the text written freely within the photographic space is: "the main role of the image is that it keeps memory for us, since life (world, humans) do not last forever". The inscription written in the Kodak paper identifies the photographer who took this image as Amir Seyyed Mohammad Akkasbashi. Interestingly, the signature has been introduced, as in other photographs, by the word *'amal* and this agrees with Blair's statement about the generalized use of this word to introduce signatures on objects. The image has been mastered both in composition and atmosphere. The photograph is also remarkable for the pose/camera and clothes. The clothes are a mixture of Persian traditional clothes that present an elegant design of vest, shirt and belt that contrast with the Western-style coat. The composition is mastered through a triangle formed by the camera (looking leftwards), the chair (looking rightwards) and the head of the sitter. The elegant pose of the photographer together with his interesting face and appearance, complete a magnetic image that has been prepared with great detail and care.

As a conclusion it is important to stress that independently of which kind of information is given in the inscription (factual or interpretative), the language is always poetic. This is probably the most important conclusion of my research on this topic since it establishes a clear link between the use and function of text in painting and photography. Consistently, most of the inscriptions found in nineteenth-century Iranian photographs are poems or have been written on a poetic tone, even if they are not real poems.

The third group, **illumination,** includes images such as figures 75 and 76, that are examples of how the photographs were mounted in frames and how illumination took

place within the photographic space. In the first one we can read, in *Nasta'liq* script, the name of the person depicted: *khanezad dowlat abad-mot'dat Mirza Mehdi Khan nayyeb besarate hareje",* an important political figure in foreign affairs, Mirza Mehdi Khan. Here the text is totally integrated in the decorative cartouche as happens many times in miniatures. In the second one we can read, in *Thuluth* script: *Wali-'ahd, akskhane-ye mobarekeye hazrat-e vala va hana-fada Khanezad Manuchehr Hassan 'Ali Khan Garusi (Amir Nezam)*. In this case, the inscription informs us that the photographer is Manuchehr and the person depicted, 'Ali Khan Garusi. We can easily compare the way of placing and presenting the calligraphic inscriptions in this last photograph and the illuminated page decorations already considered above (see figure 65). We can see that the illuminators also had a role in the final image produced in a photograph and this is again something that has been inherited from the Persian painting tradition and its use of calligraphy. See also figures 70 and 72, since they also present this kind of illumination.

Spatial Organization

If we would classify the photographs by the way in which the inscriptions have been placed on the photographic space (**framed/organized** or **freely written**), figures 66, 68, 72 and 73 would belong to the first group and figures 67, 69, 70, 71 and 74 would belong to the second group. These two ways of implementing text in a photograph have been inherited from the painting tradition, since we find both ways on paintings: compare, for instance, images 54 and 55, in which the text has been placed in boxes, therefore in a framed/organized way with figure 56 or the Qajar paintings, in which the text has been placed within the pictorial space freely and playing with the composition, sometimes in decorative cartouches that contrast with the rigidity of the boxes used in the previous images. There are clear similitudes between the way of placing the text in the photographic space in images 66, 68, 72 and 73, all of them using cartouches or/and boxes to place the text and to frame them like is the case in many Persian miniature paintings. In contrast to this, images 67, 69, 70, 71 and 74 share a way of placing the text freely in the photographic space without the rigidity of boxes or cartouches, playing with the composition of the photograph. Actually, figure 74 is quite remarkable as far as the different way in which two inscriptions have been implemented on the photograph. The first inscription is found in a piece of paper (Kodak) and is, therefore, pre-photographic and is shown IN the photographic space. Whereas the second inscription has been written freely ON the photographic space and is therefore post-photographic. Notice that the text seems to adopt some visual pleasing form, like a smooth-shaped cartouche (see the right and left inscriptions on image 70, the left inscription on image 71 and, especially the text on image 69). These cartouche-like forms remind us of the cartouches in Qajar portrait paintings (see images 53, 57, 58 and 60).[173]

[173] It would be very interesting to explore if the visual laterality phenomenon would affect the way in which the text is placed on the photograph, as I have already suggested while analyzing Qajar portrait paintings, as far as composition is concerned. In order to undertake such a study, I need to gather material like figures 67, 69, 71 and 74, portraits that present calligraphic inscriptions at the right or left of the sitter. Of the four images just mentioned, in three of them the text has been placed at the left of the person depicted and one just at the right, the contrary of what I have found in painting. Is this consistent with graphic design rules or page composition? This topic remains open to further research.

Unlike the Persian art tradition, this use of text within the photographic space in the West is a recent phenomenon. As remarked by Helen Westgeest in the course of a conversation in September 2008, you can put a text in a Japanese sumi-e landscape painting or in a Japanese photography, but if you would write a text in a Western nineteenth-century oil painting it would disturb the effect of the painting. The same goes for Western illusionary photographs: you can add text for a decorative Iranian photograph, but not in a "spatial" Western photograph. She further pointed out to the interesting solution found by the American photographer Robert Frank (see fig. 77), since he managed to place the text within the photographic space without disturbing the final image thanks to the integration of the text within a piece of paper that is part of the photograph already. That piece of paper acts as a frame for the text and, therefore, does not disturb the final reception of the image. It is interesting to compare this last image with the one that I selected for the section on Iranian photography and text (fig. 74) since it also uses this kind of solution but several decades before and next to another way of implementing calligraphy freely on the photographic space!

The relation between image and written text is so well rooted in the cultural subconscious of the Iranian artist that nowadays it is very easy to find such examples in every field of Iranian visual arts. It is, indeed, one of the most important and defining aspects of Iranian contemporary art and it can be found in painting, animation, video-art and photography. In the visual arts, some artists find themselves looking back to their past, in search of inspiration. To be sure, history never repeats itself in the same way, but it rescues from the past old themes and present them in new garb. This applies to Iranian photography as well. The work of the most internationally recognized Iranian photographer and video artist Shirin Neshat is a good example of this. She has lived in New York since 1972 and has dealt with her sense of displacement by trying to disentangle the ideology of Islam through art. The result was "Women of Allah" (1993-97), a photographic series of militant Muslim women that subverts the stereotype and examines the Islamic idea of martyrdom.[174] The verses handwritten on the photographs emphasize Neshat's beliefs (fig. 78). Other Iranian artists, such as the Iranian graphic designer Reza Abedini[175] caught my attention for the use of parts of one Qajar photograph and calligraphic inscriptions mixed in perfect harmony with the image, in the way in which Persian miniatures and calligraphic inscriptions do (fig. 79). His interesting work is a good combination of his creativity in producing personal graphic design and his individual skill in adapting the knowledge and achievements of Iran's artistic heritage, making it new and compelling these days. Even among sculptors there is a current that exemplifies the desire to move calligraphy into the three-dimensional world. Some Iranian artists create sculptural calligraphy, like the pioneer in this field Parvin Tanavoli (fig. 80).[176]

Going back to my corpus of photographs, I must note here that of all material found of women photographic portraits, none of them carried inscriptions. The only examples that I have found, were the private albums that Naser od-Din Shah made

[174] For further reading about the work of Shirin Neshat: Dabashi, Hamid. "The Gun and the Gaze: Shirin Neshat's Photography" and Zaya, Octavio. "Sounds of Desire, Zones of Contention (Islam, Women and The Veil), in *Shirin Neshat, Women of Allah*. Milano, Marco Noire Editore, 1997; Schmidt, Brita/Stammer, Beatrice E. *Shirin Neshat,* Berlin, Steidl Verlag, 2005.

[175] Abedini was awarded with the Prince Claus Award in 2006.

[176] Further reading about this topic in: Blair, Sleila S., "From Traditional Styles to Graphic Design and Calligraphic Art", in *Islamic Calligraphy,* Edinburg University Press, Edinburg, 2006, pp. 589-627.

with photographs of most of his wives and many of his children. They are just informative inscriptions, with no artistic intention at all, that sometimes reveal the name of the woman depicted. Interestingly enough, a Persian word that is easy to find next to several of the photographs is *mord,* which means dead.

Text and Nineteenth-Century Photography in other countries in Asia

I have already suggested at the beginning of this section that it is important to ask if the use of calligraphy in Iranian photography is a particular and defining element of this culture, or if it is also used by other cultures like Chinese or Japanese. Calligraphy is regarded in China and Japan as the supreme artistic achievement. Painting, which uses the same basic materials of brush and ink on paper or occasionally silk, became the sister of calligraphy, while poetry, for its expression is linked inseparably to writing.[177] I have researched, mainly through printed books, nineteenth-century Japanese and Chinese photography, and it seems that the Japanese photographers at least used calligraphic inscriptions within the photographic space.[178] From around 200 Japanese photographs analyzed (taken by Japanese photographers) from the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, I have found a few, like *Quiet Temple in Autumn Woods* (fig. 81) that includes some Japanese calligraphy on the surface of the photograph. The author of this photograph is Urahara Seiho and it was taken in 1926. This kind of image belongs to the ones taken by photographers who discovered the chiaroscuro of the traditional brush-ink tradition.[179] The text is a piece of poetry, written in Kanbun (Chinese script). The use of text or inscriptions in the photographic space may have been inspired by Japanese traditional painting in particular by the ukiyo-e, or wood-prints. The term ukiyo-e, or "pictures of the floating world," refers to a style of genre painting and woodblock printing that appeared in Japan in the seventeenth century and that was practiced until the nineteenth century, more exactly the Edo Era (1603-1868). As the Japanese art historian Tadashi Kobayashi states, the phrase "floating world," which was originally associated with a Buddhist world view and alluded to the ephemerality of man's existence, subsequently came to suggest a hedonistic preoccupation with the present moment, with the latest fashions, pursuits, and life style of an urban culture, and implied a certain chicness.[180]

The three themes that recur most often in ukiyo-e painting are the beautiful women (*bijin*) and their world in the tea house and at home, the samurai, and the landscape. The influence of the ukiyo-e painting tradition on nineteenth-century Japanese photography is also evident in hand-coloured photography, which not only adopts the paintings' colour palette, but also copies the poses of the persons depicted and even the objects that they are holding.[181] *A married woman inspects her black teeth in a mirror* (fig. 82), a typical ukiyo-e, was painted by Kitagawa Utamaro (1754-1806). On the top right corner we find a cartouche divided in three parts; in the two outer sections we can read some calligraphic inscriptions: in the right section the title of the series to which this ukiyo-e belongs is written in black ink (*Fujin sogaku jittai,* "Ten Women Type Physiognomies") and in red ink we can see a seal that reveals the

[177] Shimizu and Rosenfield 1984.
[178] For nineteenth century Japanese photography: Bennet 1996; Ozawa 1981; Delank 1997.
[179] Japan Photographers Association 1980, p. 15.
[180] Tadashi 1992, p. 65.
[181] Pérez 2008.

identity of one of the owners of this artwork. In the left side of the cartouche written in black ink we can read *somi* (physiognomic seen) on the top, and on the bottom the name of the painter, Utamaro. This method of placing calligraphic inscriptions within the pictorial space is particular to the Japanese painting tradition.

The Japanese photographer Yokoyama Matsusaburo (1838-1884) also used consistently text within the photographic space, and he even chose to write both in red and black ink, like the painters did. The fact that other Japanese photographers such as Kojima Ryua also tended to add inscriptions within the photographic space, points to the fact that this combination of the two techniques, image and text, was an element particular to indigenous Japanese photography, like it is the case in Iran.[182] In portrait of Nitta Tomi taken by Yokoyama in 1872 (fig. 83) we can read an inscription written in Kanji script with black ink. The first four signs reveal the date in which the photograph was taken, "ca. the 5th year of the Meiji Era", and the next three signs reveal that the technique used was albumin paper, "Japanese-lack paper". In red ink the photographer has written very detailed information about the process, the identity of the poseur and where the photograph was taken: "Nitta Tomi, sister of (illegible sign), the 7th year of the Meiji Era a photo-studio was opened next to the five-stock pagoda of the premises of the Asakusa-Temple".[183]

As pointed by Helen Westgeest while viewing these images together, this way of placing the calligraphic inscriptions on a white strip was also done previously in the Ukiyo-es or Japanese woodprints. This indicates that the traditional Japanese painting tradition may have influenced the aesthetics used by some nineteenth-century Japanese photographers, like Yokoyama who was also an outstanding painter. Another portrait of the same woman, but taken by Yokoyama two years after, depicts the woman in the traditional kneeling pose (fig. 84). Here the calligraphic inscriptions have been placed on the left side of the image, again on a white strip and they have been written in red ink. One of the most interesting elements in this photograph is, again, the inscription placed on a white strip on the right top corner. The text has been written in Kanji script with red ink and gives us exhaustive information about date, technique used to produce the photograph and factual information about the person depicted. On the top right, Yokoyama inform us that this photograph constitutes the beginning of his work on the topic of women portraits and identifies the sitter as Nitta Tomi. Under this information, we find another inscription that inform us of the fact that Yokoyama opened a photo-studio on the premises of the Asakusa-Temple. On the left, the inscription informs us of the date in which the photograph was taken, "ca. the 7th year of the Meiji Era" and where, "in Yokoyama's studio in Ikenohata".

The last photograph selected here from this photographer depicts Yamamoto Rempei, disciple of Matsusaburo (fig. 85). It is an interesting image since it has been heavily overpainted with oil with a technique that was developed by himself. As stated by the Japanese curator of the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Yokoe Fuminori, he called this technique Shashin Abura-e or oil painting photograph, by which the film covering the photograph is peeled off and the photo is colored with oil pigments. This was probably the completion of a way of expression synthesizing both

[182] For biographical information and an impressive selection of his work see: Yokoe 1997.

[183] I am very grateful to Jun Ueno (Japanisches Kulturinstitute in Cologne, Germany) for his translations of all texts of the Japanese photographs selected here.

techniques of photography and oil painting, of which he had been in quest for many years.[184]

Portrait of Yamamoto Rimpei, is actually an example of his *shashin abura-e* or "photographic oil-paintings" (the original is in colour), as he has indicated in the lower part of the inscription in the top right white strip, in Kanji script: "the back of the photograph has been hand-coloured". This agrees with Bennett's description of this technique, that involved peeling off the emulsion covering the face of a photograph and then painting the rear side with oil paints.[185] Under this inscription we can read, the work of the master Yokoyama. On the bottom right white strip we find a very long and detailed inscription that inform us of the date in which Yokoyama started experimenting with this technique and how: "ca. the 13th year of the Meiji Era he discovered this technique and in the 15th year of the era the technique was refined. At that time, the photographer hired Mr. Ryoichi Komamezawa as his assistant and they made experiments with this technique together. His assistant started in the 17th year of the Meiji Era to…. (illegible)". The name of the sitter has been written in the left bottom corner: disciple Yamamoto Rimpei.

Another interesting Japanese author who used calligraphy in his work was Kojima Ryua. The collage of Kojima Ryua and his family (fig. 86) taken in 1873 is astonishing and very *avant-garde* for its time. It is both aesthetically pleasing and intriguing. Ryua himself is placed on the left side of the final image, resting his elbow on his camera and looking at his wife and child who have been photographed in two different poses and then pasted together to complete this unique collage. A calligraphic inscription that reads "willow; frog" has been placed on a white strip that seems to have been painted to give the impression of a piece of wood, like the Ukiyo-es. One of its corners is broken and the fact that in other of his photographs we find the same white-wooden strip with broken corner, seems to point to the fact that it may have been an effect made in purpose by the author. This is also the case in the next image, a self-portrait of Kojima Ryua taken in around 1870 (fig. 87) in which he is depicted in the traditional Japanese kneeling pose. The calligraphic inscription reads: "Ryua Kojima; photographer; born in Mino (today, province of Gifu); as a child he was named Gorosaku; willow; frog". The first three signs give factual information, but the last two "willow-frog" may have some poetic meaning (referring probably to a well-known Japanese fairy tale). The last Japanese photograph selected for this section depicts Iinuma Yokusai and was taken by an unknown Japanese photographer around 1863 (fig. 88).

I have also found some interesting nineteenth century Chinese photographs that belong to the Empress Dowager Cixi collection hosted at the Freer and Sackler Gallery in Washington[186]: they are the typical studio portraits of that time, but instead of placing the calligraphic inscription on the photographic space, it has been placed IN the photographic space as part of the studio paraphernalia! (see figs. 89 and 90)

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[184] Yokoe 1997, pp. 182-83.

[185] Bennet 2006, p. 83.

[186] This collection contains forty-four glass plate negatives depicting the Empress Dowager of China, Cixi (1835-1908), of the Qing dinasty, mostly photographed from 1903 to 1905 by the Chinese photographer Xunling (1874-1943). The collection is available on-line at: http://siris-collections.si.edu/search/results.jsp?fq=online_media%3A%22Images%22&q=xunling&view=grid&start=0

Also recently, I have found some Indian photographs that use calligraphy. A portrait of Nawab Raj Begum Sahibah of Oudh (fig. 91), taken by the Indian photographer Ahmed `Ali Khan around 1855, presents an interesting and quite long inscription in Persian:

شبیه نواب راج بیکم صاحبه که یکی از ممتو عات حضرت سلطان عالم خلد الله ملکه وسلطنته اند یسکن از جمله مروئی
با پوشاک هندی پرزر و زیورهائی مرصع در دست وگوش آراسته وباف زرین کار چوب بر سریر نشسته
بتصور ملاقات حضرت سلطان عالم خلد الله ملکه و سلطنته در عالم جوش دو نو قمر بر کرسی نقره نشسته
بسن بیست وسه ساله سنه ۱۲۷۱ هجری مطابق سنه جلوس میمنت مانوس عمل بیت السلطنت لکهنو

which reads, as translated by Witkam: "The image of Raja Begum Sahiba, who belongs to the most fortunate excellent sultans of the world, may God perpetuate his (her?) reign and power, and may he (she?) … in Indian clothing full of gold and studded with gold ornaments, ornamented with jewels in the hand and the ear, (clothed) in gold woven textile, …. sitting on the throne (of sculpted wood?)/ imaging to meet the excellent sultan of the world, may God perpetuate his reing and his power in the world… seated on a silver throne/ at the age of twenty-three years in the year 1271 of the *higra* (1854-1855), coinciding with the year of the happy ascension to the unrivalled throne, (in) the abode of power Lucknow.

Nawab Zorawar Khan of Kanota (1826-1908) is depicted in a gelatine silver print overpainted afterwards with watercolors (fig. 92) that was taken by an anonymous Indian photographer around 1890. The painted photograph has a double inscription, the first one being in Urdu (right) and the other in Hindi (left). This image was identified by Giles Tillotson, who is a specialist in Jaipur:[187] "the inscription (which was read for me by a student as SOAS, Saqib Baburi: "Nawab Zoravan Khan Sahib Bahadur". My conjecture is that this is Thakur Sahib Zorawar Singh of Kanota (1826-1908). The image clearly depicts the subject sitting in the veranda of the Chandra Mahal of the Jaipur City Palace in a somewhat proprietorial manner!" The third Indian image that is interesting for this purpose is a portrait of the Maharana Swarup Singh of Udaipur (1815-61), taken by an unknown Indian photographer and fully over-painted afterwards by the Indian painter Pannalal Parasram Gaur, as the inscription in Hindi reveals (fig. 93). In this case, the signature is precisely the signature of the painter who almost erased completely the photographic origins of this artwork.

It is interesting to note that when comparing the use of text or calligraphic inscriptions in these three countries, the decorative tendency and elaborated ornament of the Iranian calligraphy contrast with a more sober use of Japanese and Indian calligraphy. However my research has been much deeper in the Iranian case than in the other two countries.

To conclude, the use of text within the photographic space is one of the cultural components of a photograph analyzed here, as I have shown in this chapter through visual analysis of the role and meaning of the inscriptions in the photographic surface. The photographer constructs within the photographic space a frame of real life and the use of inscriptions helps to reinforce the intention of the photographer by giving either

[187] This information was given to me by the photohistorian Stephanie Roy Barath, curator of the Alkazi Collection of Photography (Delhi) where this photograph is hosted.

factual information or a more symbolic one. Text/calligraphy and image have been always closely related in the Iranian visual culture tradition. The use and function of text or the calligraphic inscriptions in Iranian photography, whether for informative or as a philosophical purposes is mostly influenced and inherited from the Persian painting tradition, though it is not so uniquely Iranian. I have been looking at books on nineteenth-century Japanese and Indian photography and I have found some examples with inscriptions. Nevertheless, the role and function of such inscription may not be the same, and this is a topic for further research.

The influence of the traditional use of calligraphy or text in painting and later on in nineteenth-century photography is apparent. The function of the calligraphic inscriptions used in Persian painting has not only an aesthetic purpose but also an informative one. Sometimes other kind of inscriptions can be found, like poetry or philosophical thoughts, but those are not as widely used as the previous ones, at least in Qajar portraiture. In this kind of paintings, the name of the person depicted is placed in the upper part of the picture, whereas the name of the author is placed in the lower part. This is all valid if we take into consideration male portraiture, but in the case of female portraiture, the situation is different since these artworks are in most cases unsigned and without any other kind of calligraphic inscriptions. The same happens in photography when taking in consideration the portraiture of women. The hierarchy implied by the way in which the text has been implemented in the pictorial space is not to be found in portraiture of men in photography. This is an important difference between the two mediums. The way in which the text or calligraphic inscription has been implemented within the pictorial and photographic space is also related: sometimes the text is placed within cartouches, other times it flows freely in the artwork's space. Interestingly, regardless of the content or meaning of the script, the language used in the inscriptions placed on photographs is a poetic one.

Another important conclusion is that signatures of the photographers on the photographs are often introduced by the word *'amal,* precisely like it happens with most of the inscriptions placed in objects to introduce the name of the author, the artist.